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A Brief Presented

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Brief to the Alberta Commission on Educational Planning by the University 1



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by the Faculty of Education

of the University of Alberta

to The Alberta Commission

on Educational Planning



March 1970

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April 17, 1970

Mr. A. W. Anderson
Administrative Officer
Commission on Educational Planning
Ste. 400
11010 - 142 Street
Edmonton 50, Alberta

Dear Mr. Anderson:

On behalf of the Faculty of Education of The University of Alberta we are submitting this brief for consideration of the Commission on Educational Planning. The brief has been prepared by an interdepartmental committee appointed by the Faculty of Education Council. Since it was prepared in this way it does not necessarily reflect in every detail the views of all members of the staff of the Faculty, but it does in general represent a consensus.

Yours sincerely,

Herbert T. Coutts

H. T. Coutts, Dean
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

BRIEF

TO

THE COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

INTRODUCTION

This brief, prepared by an ad-hoc committee of the Faculty of Education, includes a limited description of anticipated societal trends and problems of the next three decades. The central dimension of the submission is the presentation of the necessary and probable changes in schooling and in the Faculty of Education which will occur before the year 2000. These anticipated changes in many instances will be responses to and/or outcomes of the trends and problems foreseen and described in Section I.

SECTION I: SOCIETY OF THE FUTURE

IA: SOCIETAL TRENDS

Society in the decades immediately ahead will be shaped and characterized by the following conditions:

1. Continued urbanization, interprovincial and international migration and increased mobility of peoples are likely to produce, along with natural increase, a more heterogeneous, concentrated and expanded population.
2. Growth in technology and all branches of knowledge will likely provide man with increased power and the essential equipment for greater control of his environment.

3. Expanded productivity and increased environmental control will likely make more wealth available both for private and public purposes.

4. Fewer people will likely be needed in remunerative employ to provide the basic goods and services of society. While new specializations and jobs will develop, some within existing professions, there will be a general increase in leisure time available to members of society.

5. Apart from large scale natural disaster, the greatest threat to our existence will likely be the waste associated with carelessness, over-consumption and pollution.

6. Institutions will likely continue to grow in size and complexity and will likely become more impersonal and remote. The foci of political, economic, social and ideological power will be more difficult to locate and to influence. Such developments will likely cause large segments of the population to oscillate between the extremes of docility and rebellion.

7. Conditions in the world will likely be of increasing concern. Gross injustices, as evidenced in the disparate conditions between rich and poor, will become the basis of a greater awareness of the importance of international cooperation and action. Survival will be seen to depend upon the willingness of the more fortunate to involve themselves in assisting the less fortunate.

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6. Tensions will likely continue to grow in size

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selves in assisting the less fortunate.

IB: RELATED PROBLEMS

One of the challenges implicit in a consideration of the future is the identification of those critical areas which could limit the attractiveness of our future existence. The following are attempts to identify such crucial areas:

1. As the population increases and becomes more concentrated, there will be a need to make more efficient use of our food supply and our living space. Ecologists are already pointing out that waste and destruction of our natural environment are at a danger point. If we are to preserve the health and productivity of our environment, we must place a greater reliance upon our expanding knowledge. Further, we must give higher priority to the establishment of environmental controls which will ensure the basic conditions for a healthy, comfortable existence.

2. As conditions and values change, there will be many factors contributing to a loss of identity and meaning or purpose in life. We must confront these changes with the dual intention of lessening their negative impact and of heightening the awareness of new sources of identity and meaning in peoples' lives. The following appear critical enough now to warrant attention in the future:

- a) Preparation for and involvement in remunerative

employ have been central ingredients of our lives. Purpose and satisfaction for many have been related to such things as the quality of the job done or the amount of money earned. A significant void is likely to appear in the lives of many people as fewer individuals are needed for service and production and as more leisure time becomes available. Already we have evidence of the disruptive impact of increased leisure in women's lives as they are freed from some of the menial tasks associated with home care. Provision must be made so that people will have satisfying and meaningful things to do when the impact of greater leisure is felt.

b) Interaction with other people and involvement in their lives have been important sources of personal satisfaction. As more people move into urban complexes, impersonalization and loneliness will proliferate unless people are equipped with ways of combatting these feelings. City governments will need to give more consideration to problems associated with the struggles for privacy, satisfying human interaction, maintenance of dignity in depressed areas and optimum health.

c) The continuance and perhaps increase of poverty, war, sickness, depression and ignorance will also undermine the achievement of the satisfying life. Though these conditions may not prevail in our own immediate

environs, members of our society will not be content if we fail to provide whatever remedial and corrective action is possible.

d) As moral standards change, uncertainty and frustration will be produced. Ways must be found of either accommodating these changes in the lives of people or of lessening the conflict between the proponents of the old and the new morality.

SECTION II: EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE

IIA: ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

Assignment of responsibility for a solution to the ills of our future society might well be given to education. Such an approach would be neither new nor unique. The challenge of such an approach would reside in describing the role of the school in such a process. One of the classic illustrations of assigning the school major responsibility for societal change was proffered by George Counts during the height of the depression of the 1930's. He recommended that the schools assume a leadership role in rebuilding the society and that they become more actively engaged in the affairs of the community. Though his recommendation stimulated much discussion, the impact upon the schools as evidenced in changed practice was minimal. Teachers have continued, with only slight modification,

to pursue a conservative role as they avoided controversial matters.

Such a conservative approach may not be feasible in the years ahead. It will be increasingly more difficult for the schools of the future to be isolated from the activities and problems of the larger society. The traditional boundaries of the school are likely to be extended so that the resources of the total community will be available to the teachers and students for learning experiences. Involvement in the basic value questions and problems of the society will almost automatically accompany the new relationship of school and community. Involvement will not be limited to a sterile academic examination of issues but will proceed to the point of overt pressure and action designed to produce desired and necessary changes.

Can the schools of the future avoid being an integral part of the community and of social change? It would seem that such an involvement cannot be avoided. Teachers must, therefore, be equipped for an essential change of role and responsibility.

IIB: AIMS OF EDUCATION

In that statements of aims are value statements, there is no reason to believe that any set of aims will satisfy the total population. Sometimes in an attempt to

gain total agreement, aims are stated in broad, meaningless, vague terminology. Such an approach fails to offer a specific and definite direction to education. Ambiguity and possible conflicting interpretations must be removed from statements of aims.

Students of the future will need to acquire and retain an attitude of inquiry and curiosity. Further, they will need to be equipped with essential skills of communication and research. As interests and careers become more diverse and as knowledge continues to expand exponentially, it will be extremely difficult to identify a common core of essential facts. More important than mastery of a core of factual information will be involvement in experiences which result in the student being excited with learning and imbued with a desire to continue learning. These are the skills and attitudes which are essential to a life of learning and which will help to make leisure time an asset rather than a burden.

The importance of social skills and attitudes cannot be overlooked. While much in education will be of a highly individualized nature, there will be a need for students to experience social situations which will equip them with skills and attitudes essential to cooperation and interaction. In that there will be increasing need

for people to assist one another in attempting to alleviate distress, social skills and attitudes must be fostered.

IIC: EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING OF THE FUTURE

The view of education in the future has two major dimensions. First, it is a projection based on existing conditions and recent developments. As such, the picture of the future, whether of society or of education, is more or less inevitable. On the other hand a picture of the future can be viewed as a goal towards which we are consciously working. Viewed in the latter way, the prognostication is more likely to be accurate and will likely become reality in a shorter period of time. Both dimensions are implicit in this submission.

The description of the future in education and schooling is provided under four separate headings.

1. The School of the Future

The school, as we know it, must change. Many of the learning experiences of the child and of the adult outside of the school are exciting, vivid and appealing. If these same characteristics are to pertain to the learning experiences associated with the school and the teacher, the basic approach must change. Already architecture and interior design are being altered to make the basic

environment more attractive and functional. This is only a modest beginning, however, in the direction that we need to go. More informality in the learning process, greater flexibility in the curriculum and closer integration with the ordinary life and processes of the community will need to be provided.

The traditional view of the curriculum will also be subject to alteration. Students will have more opportunity to pursue their own interests and thus have benefit of a more individualized approach to learning. They need not be bound by the progress and interests of others or by the standard subject matter boundaries. There is also the need for students to experience the satisfaction which can come from the creative process. Such emphases do not preclude the possibility for some students of a thorough, academic investigation of various subject fields. Areas such as fine arts, industrial arts and physical education will be important in the experience of the student because they have important long range potential for understanding and enriching life.

Technology, as it becomes more prevalent in the schools, will provide devices to be employed by the teacher as instructional aids. Students will employ various technological devices in obtaining information and in learning through self-serve techniques. Computers and

data banks will be used for a variety of educational purposes: record keeping, retrieval, analysis, and instruction. Similar devices will also facilitate research. There can be no question that great potential resides in the many different mechanical, electrical and electronic devices which are now available and which are yet to be devised. The challenge is to make imaginative and beneficial use of the various devices.

Change may proceed to the point where the present view of the school and the classroom is totally altered. The school, as we know it, may well be replaced by a resource and organizational center which will facilitate the development of individual and group learning experiences in a manner quite different from that of the traditional classroom. Such an approach would clearly break down the existing boundaries between the school and the community. Institutions, businesses, governmental agencies would all become part of the learning environment.

2. Educational Personnel

If the environment and conditions of learning are to be marked by departures from the present pattern, there will need to be equally significant changes in the personnel associated with the school. Many of the routine things presently done by teachers will be taken over by para-professionals, technicians or aides. Other personnel will be available as well. Psychologists, counsellors, clinicians and business managers are just a few representatives of the

group who will be assisting in the process. Administrators will have cause to examine their role, as will teachers, in that both will be freed from the minutiae of details which currently plague them. As teachers are freed from the menial, routine and clerical, they will be faced with the challenge to organize, experiment, create, innovate, lead, stimulate, sensitize and cause the student to derive the greatest personal benefit from the learning experience.

The opportunities will be there for teachers to produce and develop new programs, lessons, instructional materials, and approaches. The merits of various media and equipment can be examined. The total resources of the community will be available for utilization in exciting and appealing learning experiences.

There will be a great challenge to develop those who are to fill this highly creative leadership role. Careful consideration will have to be given to selection of candidates, retraining of existing personnel, and continual in-service preparation. Those who are to fill the role of teacher will require a vision of what can be accomplished in a flexible, individualized approach to learning. Selection of suitable candidates for teaching will be an essential ingredient of success.

3. Amount of Schooling

The basic period of schooling will be extended in

both directions. Kindergarten and post-secondary education will be provided for most of the population. Many homes and environments are deficient in the provisions made for the needs of little children. This is especially so in respect of children living in depressed areas. They need the opportunities and stimulation which can be provided in a well organized and well equipped social environment. All children can benefit from such a stimulating social situation.

As the learning experiences of young people become more exciting and satisfying, they will be favorably disposed to continue their education. This disposition will be fostered by the apparent value of more education. Education will be seen as central to finding a satisfying place in the life of the community and to the valuable filling of increased leisure time. While the number of hours in employment may diminish, the range of occupations will steadily extend, thus necessitating higher levels of general education or specialized training. The availability of more leisure will provide incentives for people to pursue educational experiences whether they be aesthetic, practical, mechanical and/or intellectual.

The institutions developed to meet the continuing needs of students will also serve as foci for adult and community-oriented education.

One of the major problems associated with the extension of educational opportunity is financial. Definite limitations will be placed upon some communities and students if the present arrangement of administrative structure is not changed. Many existing educational administrative units do not have the population and/or the financial resources necessary to provide kindergartens and post-secondary education experiences. Just as we must rethink the traditional approach to the school, we must reexamine the larger administrative unit. A simple enlargement of the unit may not suffice.

4. Research and Planning.

Educational research in Canada is considerably underdeveloped and warrants receiving strong encouragement and support. Where innovations in education have relied upon knowledge derived from research, the knowledge base has in most part been provided by foreign researchers. Canadian educational research needs encouragement, mainly in the form of financial support. Further, valuable support would be provided if research became more central to educational innovation.

Educational change should be based upon reliable research. Priority must be given to those areas of research which are in greatest need of development. The greatest challenge is in the area of learning and instruction

where the complexity and intangibility of many of the variables make it difficult to develop reliable research.

The educational endeavor of the future will be so large and complex and so in need of constant re-examination that its growth and development cannot be left to chance or to periodic reviews. Provision should be made for an ongoing planning function. Full attention will need to be paid to educational change. The person or persons fulfilling the planning function would be in a position to review continuously the progress toward stated objectives, test the continued relevance of these objectives in light of changing societal conditions and relate educational practice and change to findings in research.

SECTION III: THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Candidates being prepared as teachers must learn in an atmosphere that accurately represents and anticipates the changes occurring in the schools. The Faculty of Education, as it provides that environment of learning, must be equipped for change. It must be prepared to reevaluate continuously its offerings and approach in order to ensure the most valuable experiences for its students. The following suggestions are possible beginning points for consideration:

1. The degree program

Thus far in teacher education we have been limited by a four-year degree program and by a determined number of courses within that program. In that students will be preparing for a multiplicity of roles such as consultant, curriculum designer, research worker, innovator and motivator and in that students have a wide variety of personalities and interests, they must have available to them numerous varied experiences and offerings. The new B.Ed. program of the Faculty is a recognition of the need for more flexibility in the preparatory process. Students can vary programs within certain pre-determined limits in order to suit their own interests and goals. The revised program also attempts to provide in a variety of ways the basic learning and attitudes associated with teaching.

The challenge is before the Faculty to go even further in removing the limitations of time and courses. One approach might be to determine attitudes, understandings and behaviors essential to teaching functions and then assess individual candidates on their acquisition of these. A program designed to accompany this approach might be built upon performance modules as the basic unit of instruction. While some common attitudes, understandings and behaviors might be an outcome, there would be ample opportunity for students to vary their programs to reflect interests and

personality. The length of these modules could vary anywhere from a few hours to a full term.

Individualization could become a very basic principle under such a system. An almost infinite number of performance modules could be established from which candidates could choose. The range of choice would be evidence of individualization. More important would be the mastery or performance aspect of the program. Students could proceed to other experiences as they demonstrated sufficient mastery of a specified behavior and/or a specified body of content.

2. Accompanying changes

Alteration of the number and length of courses in the program will not suffice. Other changes must come within the Faculty and the University. Some areas worthy of consideration in this respect are:

a) The Faculty members must be willing to explore new methods of conveying information and of developing skills. For example, student teaching has been a central ingredient of teacher preparation programs since their inception. Many, who today clamor for improved programs, ask for extended periods of time in the classroom. Time spent in the classroom as student teachers may not be that important or valuable. Instead of extending student teaching, consideration might well be given to field experiences which,

coupled with theory, would help the students relate to the diverse problems of communities. Experience in middle class suburbia, rural settings and inner city areas might be invaluable in equipping students with an understanding of what might, and could, go on in classrooms. Maybe some teaching skills can best be developed in settings other than regular school classrooms. That is not to say that we are in favor of doing away with student teaching. Rather it is to acknowledge an openness to new approaches based upon sound investigation.

b) It is important that graduates be familiar with various teaching styles and requirements. This familiarity can be acquired in a variety of ways. The Faculty can demonstrate some of these qualities. Others can be acquired by observing able practitioners in various educational settings. It may be possible for students to acquire insights, skills and understandings through discussion and reading.

It is likely that members of the Faculty will spend more of their time as leaders of instructional teams, including technicians, para-professionals and aides. These teams, under the direction of the Faculty, will be charged with the responsibility of providing for a number of students those experiences which will most adequately provide valuable learning and insights. The Faculty will

thus be cast in a highly creative role. Perfection in that role will come through sound teaching accompanied by research and leadership. The Faculty will need to be engaged in organizing, planning, directing and researching in order to fulfill its role. Students will thus experience those behaviors which will be expected of them as teachers.

c) The organizational structure of the Faculty might warrant change. Performance criteria are likely to cut across the various disciplines. Instructional teams also might cut across existing departmental lines. A possible alternative, one aligned with other projections, would be the establishment of research and development centers. These centers which would focus upon larger or broader areas of interest such as child study, community study, aesthetic development, and teacher behavior would offer to students a range of important experiences. Students could participate in the research and development projects of the centers. They could experience the varying interests and views of the Faculty members participating in the centers and could, if they so chose, pursue in depth any disciplined study.

d) The Faculty would need available, not necessarily on their own premises, those resources essential to the provision of appealing and varied programs. Computer facilities, for example, would be a vital requisite of programs providing numerous performance modules. Similarly,

such a program would necessitate increased counselling facilities. Time would be essential as a resource related to creative, imaginative planning and to research.

3. Research

Research in the Faculty must receive high priority if worthwhile changes are to be realized. Good quality teaching requires direct contact with and reliance upon research. Through the Faculty students must experience research and its importance. The faculty are best able to determine those areas needing study; they have the research skills and the need for research findings, and hence are best suited for basic research related to education. The university provides a setting where their ideas and approaches can be discussed and refined. A faculty member cannot provide the appropriate educational direction unless he is afforded the chances to be involved in new developments.

In that the role of the Faculty is significantly related to research, resources must be available to enable faculty members to realize their function in this area. Direct funding of research by the Province to the Faculty is essential. Faculty members should have available to them sums of money to initiate and carry out projects. Larger sums of money should be available as well for use within the Faculty. Those larger projects funded through such sources could quite appropriately be cooperative efforts.

Problems of greater significance could be examined under the auspices of the total faculty.

Another vital part of research is access to students in learning situations. Not all of these need be in schools, but teachers and administrators need to realize the value and importance of research and development activity.

4. Wider involvement

The Faculty should be prepared to participate with their students more widely within and without the university. The concerns of the Faculty of Education should be the concerns of the total university. This fact was recognized at the turn of the century at the University of Chicago under William Rainey Harper. In that institution for a time all faculties interacted with the Department of Education under John Dewey. As a result, areas such as curriculum planning, research, and educational methodology were explored from a variety of important directions, not the least of which was a sound competency in subject matter.

As the traditional boundaries between school and community become less formal, a sheltered, isolated Faculty of Education will not achieve its purposes. The Faculty needs to demonstrate for its students the place of educators in the community. In so doing they could help establish criteria for judging issues worth discussing. They could also illustrate the way in which these issues should be

explored and acted upon, if action is deemed advisable.

5. Professional standards

Greater attention should be paid to the quality and nature of people entering teaching. The Faculty of Education can and should influence this by establishing entrance requirements which are much more selective. The quality of teachers and teaching must continue to improve. We will need people who are more able academically, and who also possess qualities of self-acceptance, creativity, sensitivity and leadership.

Certification of personnel should be more directly related to areas of competence. Teachers should be neither encouraged nor allowed, to teach at levels or in areas for which they have not been properly prepared. As well, there should be a systematic review system established so that teachers would have to keep abreast of changes in education. The Faculty should be a part of the continuing aspect of teacher education.

6. Planning for change

A framework must be established within the Faculty of Education that encourages continual assessment and rethinking of the Faculty's role. There must be a continual rather than periodic discussion of new approaches, new ideas, needed research, and changing directions. This planning function could be realized in a variety of ways ranging from a regularly scheduled, but informally constituted

discussion group, to a specifically appointed committee responsible for change. Important to this function is the encouragement of faculty-wide communication and interest.

It is important that this planning function gain recognition and support. More personnel time will be required. Interaction with other planning agencies will also be essential to proper development in the future. The actual nature of the agency is not as important as recognition and support of the idea of planning.

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